

# Cecil B. DeMille View-Master artist

By J. Clement

Cecil B. DeMille was known for his Hollywood epics, but few know that he also created a complete New Testament Bible series in 3D pictures. They were commissioned by Church-Craft and published by View-Master in 1947. The actors in the scenes are uncredited, and DeMille is only credited in the early single reel issues. Presumably he used left over sets and costumes from his epic movies. Church-Craft later came out with a competitive format to View-Master which consisted of single scene cards with Kodachrome 16mm film, the same as View-Master. The Church-Craft sets had only 6 scenes per packet while View-Master had 7 scenes per reel. Later Church-Craft put 2 scenes on each card and switched to an inferior film that faded to magenta. At the same time View-Master continued to publish some of the more interesting scenes in 3 reel packets such as "The Birth of Jesus".

The scenes are each nicely done, but the pictures tend to appear repetitive. For example the annunciation Stori-View packet has 4 scenes of Mary in various poses. The angel only appears as a bright light. The effect is repetitive and dull. This was probably done because the Church-Craft issues have complete significant verses quoted from the bible. The Church-Craft "Birth of Jesus" is not as interesting as the Florence Thomas dioramas "The Christmas Story".

Church-Craft also had an old testament series which were probably also by DeMille.



Stori-View B5 1 The Annunciation - "Fear not, Mary!"  
This is one of 4 repetitive scenes of just Mary



View-Master R1 1 Birth of the Savior - Caesar Augustus signs the decree to tax all



View-Master R2 6 Birth of the Savior - Mary ponders over all these things





View-Master R3 4 The Wise Men find Jesus - Herod sends the wise men to Bethlehem to search



View-Master R3 7 The Wise Men find Jesus - The wise men present him with gifts

R1 to R3 were also published in the three reel packet "The Birth of Jesus". Many of the scenes are compelling such as the donkey ride and Herod. The actor plays the insincere Herod very well. The various stories use different actors for the same characters. Mary in "The Annunciation" is not the same actor as used in "The Birth of the Savior". Some of the scenes in "The Birth of the Savior" have Mary very dolled up well rouged and lipsticked. I personally found this to be just too unrealistic for a mother in a stable after a long dusty donkey ride. Ah well, it was Hollywood after all.



Stori-View B23 3 Man Sick with Palsy - "Son, be of good cheer"

This Stori-View set of cards B-23 is not varied enough to have interesting pictures. The scenes 3 to 5 are shown from different angles with the sick man posed slightly differently, but they are all too similar.

Without attribution one can not be certain that all of the Bible pictures are by DeMille, but it seems likely that they all are. The CH View-Master series had attributions, but none of the Stori-View Bible cards that I have seen listed the artists. The Stori-View B-6 to B-8 have identical scenes to R-1 to R-3 and CH-6 to CH-8, with 3 scenes omitted. I think View-Master published many of the same scenes as the Stori-View cards with the exception of the cards covering the passion. View-Master covered the passion by publishing the Oberammergau passion play. Florence Thomas' Easter Story dioramas cover the resurrection to the ascension, but not the passion. Her Christmas Story covers the same scenes as the de Mille reels.

## View-Master Reels by Cecil B. DeMille

1. CH-1 The Angel Gabriel Visits Zacharias
2. CH-6A, R-1 The Birth of the Savior I
3. CH-6A, R-2 The Birth of the Savior II
4. CH-8, R-3 The Wise Men Find Jesus
5. CH-15 Jesus Turns Water into Wine
6. CH-37 Herod Kills John the Baptist
7. CH-40 Jesus Answers the Prayer of a Mother
8. CH-47 The Good Samaritan
9. CH-49 Jesus, Our Good Shepherd
10. CH 55A The Prodigal Son I
11. CH 55B The Prodigal Son II
12. CH-57 The Rich Man and Poor Lazarus
13. R-4 Parables of Jesus I
14. R-5 Parables of Jesus II
15. R-5 Parables of Jesus III
16. R-9 The Unmerciful Servant
17. R-10 Miracles of Jesus I
18. R-11 Miracles of Jesus II
19. R-12 Miracles of Jesus III

## Stori-View 6 scene packets

1. B1 Gabriel visits Zacharias
2. B-5 Annunciation to Mary
3. B-6 Jesus is Born
4. B-7 Shepherds at the Manger
5. B-8 The Wise Men find Jesus
6. B-15 Jesus turns Water into Wine
7. B-23 Man sick with Palsy
8. B-35 The Daughter of Jairus
9. B-37 John the Baptist
10. B-40 Jesus answers a Prayer
11. B-46 The Unmerciful Servant
12. B-47 The Good Samaritan
13. B-49 Jesus, The Good Shepherd
14. B-55 Prodigal Son Leaves Home
15. B-56 Prodigal Son Returns
16. B-57 Rich Man and Poor Lazarus
17. B-58 Jesus Raises Lazarus
18. B-60 The Pharisees and Publican
19. B-80 Christ's Triumphal Entry
20. B-81 The Last Supper
21. B-82 Jesus I Gethsemane
22. B-83 Jesus Before Pilate
23. B-84 Pilate Condemns Jesus
24. B-85 The Crucifixion
25. B-86 Jesus' Death and Burial
26. B-87 The Resurrection
27. B-88 The Ascension